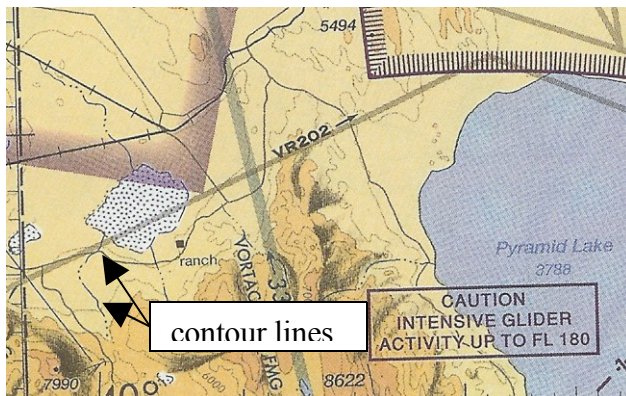


Dry Lake Landout Briefing

How High is it?

One often-overlooked aspect of landing on an airport is the fact that the field elevation is accurately known and conveniently displayed on your sectional. (Don't EVER even think of flying away from the gliderport without a sectional!) When it comes time to land on a dry lake bed, or on any other area not set up for aircraft operation, you'll have to be a little bit more creative if you want to know how high your chosen landing spot really is. You need this information not only to plan your pattern, but more importantly, to determine the altitude needed to reach the landing spot. (Remember, a GPS can't tell you this unless you can put a waypoint there, which may add too much to your workload.)

Here in northern Nevada, there are almost no locations much lower than 4000' msl. A look at the legend panel of your San Francisco or Klamath Falls sectional will tell you that the contour interval is 500 feet and that, over the elevation range of 3000 to 9000 feet, the color changes on the chart occur at the odd thousands: 3000, 5000, 7000' msl. This knowledge gives us an easy way to quickly estimate surface elevations while in flight.



Take a look at Flanigan Dry Lake on the Klamath Falls sectional. Just south of the dry lake, notice the brown tint that covers the lower portions of the mountains separating Palomino Valley from Honey Lake Valley. This color change, from yellow to brown, marks the 5000' contour. (Another color change, further south, delineates the 7000' contour. This

darker color surrounds the "8622" spot elevation figure at the bottom center of this image.) As Flanigan Dry Lake is surrounded by the yellow tint, we know that it can lie at an elevation of no more than 5000 ft. Now, look between the base of the mountains and the Flanigan shoreline. Can you count the contour lines between them? As indicated on the graphic, there are 2 contour lines, each signifying another 500' contour interval—so we can immediately conclude that Flanigan Dry Lake is no higher than 4000' msl. (As a matter of fact, a more detailed topo map indicates that Flanigan Lake is almost exactly 4000 feet high.)

This method is fast and easy in the cockpit—but try it yourself a few times to get the hang of it. To summarize: always find the nearest color change (odd thousands) above your proposed landing site, then count down by 500' for each contour line. **Remember: always count DOWN!**